

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (original): A nonwoven fabric air filter for an internal combustion engine with a pleated form which comprises an air-laid nonwoven fabric obtained by forming a plurality of layers mainly composed of polyester-based binder fibers having a fiber length of 1 to 10 mm by an air-laid nonwoven fabric production process and performing heat adhesion, wherein an upper layer side (fluid inflow side) comprises large fibers, a lower layer side (fluid outflow side) comprises fine fibers, a final fluid outflow side comprises 100% of the polyester-based binder fibers, the basis weight (METSUKE) is from 100 to 350 g/m², the apparent density is from 0.04 g/cm³ to 0.3 g/cm³, and the dry-heat shrinkage factor after 300 hours at 100°C is 3% or less.

2. (original): The nonwoven fabric air filter for an internal combustion engine according to claim 1, which has a fiber diameter of 20 to 45 µm and a basis weight of 10 to 75 g/m² in the large-fiber layer on the upper layer side, a fiber diameter of 15 to 30 µm and a basis weight of 20 to 105 g/m² in an intermediate layer, and a fiber diameter of 7 to 20 µm and a basis weight of 70 to 170 g/m² in the fine-fiber layer on the lower layer side.

3. (original): The nonwoven fabric air filter for an internal combustion engine according to claim 1, which has a fiber diameter of 25 to 50 µm and a basis weight of 5 to 50 g/m² in the

large-fiber layer on the upper layer side, a fiber diameter of 20 to 35 μm and a basis weight of 15 to 70 g/m^2 in an intermediate layer, a fiber diameter of 15 to 25 μm and a basis weight of 30 to 90 g/m^2 in a finer-fiber layer on a lower layer side, and a fiber diameter of 7 to 20 μm and a basis weight of 50 to 140 g/m^2 in the fine-fiber layer of the lowest layer.

4. (currently amended): A nonwoven fabric air filter for an internal combustion engine, in which two or more of the air filters according to claim 1 ~~any one of claims 1 to 3~~ are further compounded.

5. (currently amended): The nonwoven fabric air filter for an internal combustion engine according to claim 1 ~~any one of claims 1 to 4~~, which has water repellency.

6. (currently amended): The nonwoven fabric air filter for an internal combustion engine according to claim 1 ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~, wherein other fibers are blended with the polyester-based binder fibers in the layers other than the final fluid outflow side.

7. (currently amended): The nonwoven fabric air filter for an internal combustion engine according to claim 1 ~~any one of claims 1 to 6~~, which is compounded with another air-permeable sheet.

8. (new): A nonwoven fabric air filter for an internal combustion engine, in which two or more of the air filters according to claim 2 are further compounded.

9. (new): A nonwoven fabric air filter for an internal combustion engine, in which two or more of the air filters according to claim 3 are further compounded.

10. (new): The nonwoven fabric air filter for an internal combustion engine according to claim 2, which has water repellency.

11. (new): The nonwoven fabric air filter for an internal combustion engine according to claim 3, which has water repellency.

12. (new): The nonwoven fabric air filter for an internal combustion engine according to claim 4, which has water repellency.

13. (new): The nonwoven fabric air filter for an internal combustion engine according to claim 2, wherein other fibers are blended with the polyester-based binder fibers in the layers other than the final fluid outflow side.

14. (new): The nonwoven fabric air filter for an internal combustion engine according to claim 3, wherein other fibers are blended with the polyester-based binder fibers in the layers other than the final fluid outflow side.

15. (new): The nonwoven fabric air filter for an internal combustion engine according to claim 4, wherein other fibers are blended with the polyester-based binder fibers in the layers other than the final fluid outflow side.

16. (new): The nonwoven fabric air filter for an internal combustion engine according to claim 5, wherein other fibers are blended with the polyester-based binder fibers in the layers other than the final fluid outflow side.

17. (new): The nonwoven fabric air filter for an internal combustion engine according to claim 2, which is compounded with another air-permeable sheet.

18. (new): The nonwoven fabric air filter for an internal combustion engine according to claim 3, which is compounded with another air-permeable sheet.

19. (new): The nonwoven fabric air filter for an internal combustion engine according to claim 4, which is compounded with another air-permeable sheet.

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20. (new): The nonwoven fabric air filter for an internal combustion engine according to claim 5, which is compounded with another air-permeable sheet.